1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MJ4

As we neared the large tent, the merry "ringing" of the coffee mortar bade us welcome. Malla Sulumeh, scribe to Sheykh Tai', conducted us within.

A considerable number of tribesmen were gathered in the roomy tent. As usual, the favourite falcon of the *sheykh* stood perched on a camel-saddle.

A slave removed the bird and placed cushions on the saddle for us. The coffee-cook poked apart the pieces of glowing desert roots on the hearth and poured between them dried camel dung from a fold of his cloak. He blew energetically on the hard nuggets, the size of walnuts, until small bright flames commenced to dance all over them. Then a large, beaked can was placed on the glow and it was not long before the coffee-water boiled and bubbled over. "Revive thy spirit!" said the every-ready cup-bearer as he offered me the aromatic cup.

Previously he had, in accordance with Bedouin practice, conscientiously wiped out every cup with the sleeve of his old shirt. Adroitly he held in his other hand four small china cups without handles, like so many eggs in a nest, and jingled them lightly one against the other.

The coffee made the round. The favoured guests, whom the Negro served first (unhappily I belonged to them) were the victims of especial politeness; before pouring the coffee, he spat first into the cup and wiped it dry with his shirt sleeve. Three times had I to endure this rite at the hands of the punctilious coffee-priest, who waited on us with the utmost solemnity on each occasion. Only then might I waggle the cup between my finger-tips in token of thanks and satisfaction and hand it back to him.

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Bedouins MJ4

CHAPTER II

Autumn Stirrings

It is early November, the 2nd to be accurate, and I have ordered Salim al Muzaiyin to move his camp out into the *barr*, preparatory to my joining him. We have had a week's steady south wind, clouds are banking up in the West, and we have had distant thunder and lightning. Most of the tribes have left water and are scattering over the hinterland in search of suitable grazing grounds, for the promise of rain is near. All the tent families go off on their own and camp in twos and threes, well apart from their neighbours (a mile or so perhaps), yet within sound of rifle-shot in case of an alarm, when all must come to the help of the person attacked.

The Badawin camped round Kuwait on the Shamiyah and Dasma wells have already moved off, some to the Kabd region, some to 'Adan, some to the Huzaim and some to the Grain district. The Fidawiyah, under their Amir, Haif bin Hajraf, of the Sulaiman section of the 'Ajman, accompanied by Nahar and 'Ubaid al Mutalaqqim,* stout old warriors both, have gone to the Humatiyat region beyond Manaqish and the Shaqq, 60 miles from Kuwait. They have cunningly chosen their region because the *hubara* have arrived in the Dibdibba, and hunting with hawks is a favourite sport. The Amir, and every self-respecting young brave, possesses his hawk, a *hurr* or *shâhin* (*sakar*, *lagger* or *shâhin* falcon), and all go out as they get opportunity, and bring back game for their wives' cooking-pot. Some, especially the 'Awazim, like also to hunt hare and gazelle with *salûqis*, and great is the excitement when venison is brought home. The young hunters go far from their tents, and if they find that the gazelle meat will not keep, they spread the carcase out in the shape of a mat, having removed the ribs and larger bones, and

* Was one of the forty who helped Bin Sa'ud to capture Riyadh, though not among the actual twenty-three who rushed Qasr 'Ajlan in the heart of the city.

I: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI1
Bedouins MJ4

B 224 251 prepare the venison with salt into what they call *yellah*, a sort of biltong, slashing it into long slices to allow the salt to penetrate and to enable ribbon-like strips to be easily removed at home for food.

K 132 This is a season for rejoicing, the rains are close at hand, there is a nip in the air of a morning and fires are in demand at night. Once again the desert comes to life after the long, weary, soul-killing heat of summer, the scorching suffocating duststorms, the need to stay close-camped near water, and the ever-present dread that your enemy knows where you are and by a sudden dash may carry off your camels, nay, all you possess, in one swift raid.

B 312 132 For water, the various tent dwellers send in camels to the nearest wells, often as far as 30 miles away, once in five, six or seven days. Neither camel, sheep nor man is very thirsty these days, so water is no longer the immediate necessity of life. As the first rains fall and grass begins to come up, water is less and less required by the live-stock, till finally in the full *rabi'* (spring) when grass is well up and succulent, only man requires it.

B 223 K 223 This is the season also when the Shaikhs of Kuwait, as well as all other rulers in Arabia, start going deep into the high desert in search of *hubara*. The practice of hunting on camel-back has gone. The motor car serves the purpose better. Great hunters, like His Highness Shaikh Ahmad, Shaikh 'Ali al Khalifah and Shaikh Salim al Hamud, are out two or three times a week. They nearly always spend at least one night bivouacking in the blue (*khalla*) without tent or covering beyond their *'abbas*. It is unmanly and soft to take even a small shelter. The huntsman and falcon bearers (*khaddám*) are all of the Rashaida tribe, born Esaus all, with eyes like their own hawks, and with the uncanniest knowledge of the habits of the *hubara*. The courtly and religious Nazzal, famous over North and Central Arabia for his knowledge and eye for country, is there, so are Sa'ud bin Nimran, the lion-hearted and jovial; Addas, the hawk-eyed; Gharaiyib, the smeller of *hubara* from afar, and great raider of war days; Sa'ad, the tracker; Mirshid al Shammari, of the renowned Ibn Twala clan, and old Saif bin Ta'ami, companion of the great Mubarak in many a past raid.

Of hawks we have the famous "Dhiáb", "Kabrit", "Sultán" and

1/1 [early November -- August]

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lord of all the tireless killer "Petrol"—the Shaikh's own hawk, who has been known alone to kill as many as twelve birds in one day. (See Chapter XXVIII.)

Salim, my man, has taken three days to get to Araifjan wells, with his wife Amsha, his charming daughter Hussa, his sister Maneira, and other members of his household. He has already sent for his sheep from the Suda region in Hasa, where they have summered under the care of Faráj and Faláh, both of the 'Awazim tribe. Great is the rejoicing, for thirty-six lambs have been born, with more to follow by the end of October. The flock has been nearly doubled since the previous Spring. Better still, fifteen of the lambs are males, which will be killed on suitably festive occasions. Maziad, the Dhafiri, in charge of the camels (fourteen of them) reports the animals' condition to be perfect, in spite of the long summer in the Huzaim and Suda regions. He himself has just come in from Riyadh with Salim. They went to see how the head of the family, Ibrahim al Muzaiyin (late standard bearer to the great Mubarak of Kuwait, and now with Bin Sa'ud) is faring. Salim now writes in to say that the "Gunsul's" camp is pitched and all is ready for him to come out—"Gunsul" (Consul) is the name given locally to the Political Agent.

On the 11th November I pack up what remaining goods and chattels have to be taken, such as *dushaks*, *masnads*, *shaddd* and *qalims* (mattresses for guests, cushions to lean on, camel saddle with full sheepskin cover and bright-coloured Persian rugs), and I order the worthy Sáleh, my Najdi driver, to convey me to my camp. Already my wife's she-camel Farha, of the famous 'Umaniyah breed, has gone ahead, also Naidi, Farhan and the sweet-tempered Jarua—my two horses and mare respectively. The last is a present from 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud, the Great King, and she has been named after the famous grey mare of the late Faisal al Duwish—slain by the order of his wife Amsha when that great chieftain surrendered to the English in 1930 at Jahrah. My wife and I were with her when the deeply touching deed was done.

As I am going the next day down to the Hazaim district and Wafra in the Neutral Zone, I take Sa'ud bin Nimran with me and his hawk, also Jawad, my personal servant. News has arrived that the Birzani, ibn Shaja'an, one of Bin Sa'ud's patrol leaders, with twenty men is

l: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
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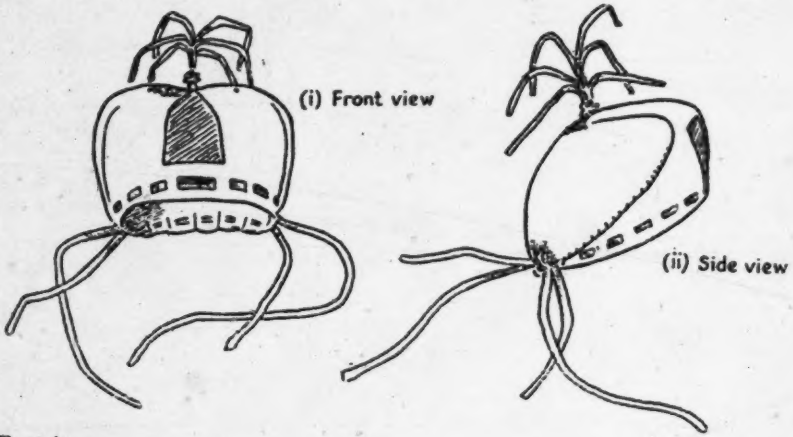
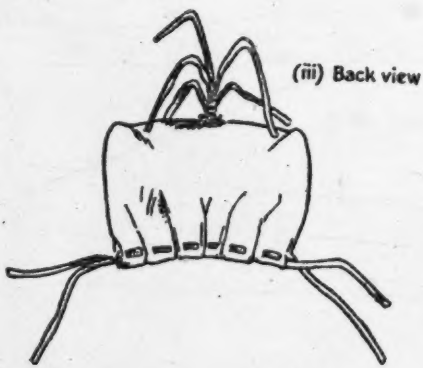
HAWKING OUTFIT

Leather BURQA or HOOD



To tighten,
pull long thin
leather thongs

To loosen,
pull short thicker
leather thongs



DASMA AL TAIR
(Hawker's leather glove)

WAKAR AL TAIR
(Hawk stand)

Men's Clothes

Chap. V

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(*r*) *'Assa*—camel stick (made of cane).
(*s*) *Bakúra*—camel stick (cane).
(*t*) *Miżúda*—the small bag made of wool or leather for carrying money, *hail* or small quantities of dates when a man is travelling alone.
(*u*) *Risan*—camel's halter.

FALCON'S GEAR

223

(See Chapter XXVIII on Hawking)

(*v*) *Burqa*—hawk's hood.
(*w*) *Wakar al tair*—hawk's stand.
(*x*) *Dasma al tair*—falconer's glove.

NOTE.—Other articles of furniture connected with a *well-to-do* person's tent are the— 352

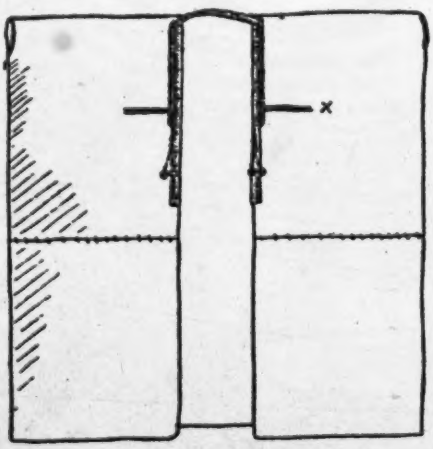
Mattrah (plural: *mattarah*)—mattress for guests to sit on.
Mafrash—carpets to spread on floor.

We have also the various forms of firewood found in every tent, rich and poor alike. These are known under the general terms of— 372

Jalla—camel dung.
Hamdh—a pungent-smelling bush giving a fine white ash.
'Arfaj—a well-known bush found all over North-Eastern Arabia.

291

MEN'S CLOTHING



'ABBAH

'Abbah or *Bisht*—made of finely woven sheeps' or camels' wool in two pieces. Texture can be superfine, thin, coarse or thick according to means of weaver. Round neck and down both fronts (shaded portion) is fine gold embroidery ending in a couple of tassels on both sides. The horizontal gold braid (x) indicates that the *'Abbah* is of type worn by shaikhs of Kuwait. Colour—all shades of brown verging on to black.

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Capture of Riyadh

Chap. XXII

After lunch we heard all about the hawk incident. The bird had been branded between the eyes much as *salúqi* dogs are branded by the Badawin for distemper. The wound made by the *hubara* was on the top centre of the head, and was as large as a sixpence, the brand was the size of a threepenny bit and was placed just in front of the other wound. The hawk looked very sorry for itself, but Amir Haif assured me it would get quite well and "recover its courage". He said he was known to be an expert falcon doctor, and everyone knew that what he said would turn out as foreshadowed. I cordially hoped it would.

After lunch we met Nahar al Mutalaqqim and his brother 'Abdulla (known as 'Ubaid from the dark colour of his skin, and his rather thick lips). Both were the Shaikhs of the Al Mutalaqqim sept of the 'Ajman, and great warriors.

'Ubaid told me that he had been one of the famous twenty paladins* (two of Sbei, one Qahtani and seventeen of 'Ajman) who under the leadership of Bin Sa'ud, Muhammad his brother, and 'Abdulla ibn Jiluwi had captured Riyadh and killed Ajlan, the Bin Rashid Governor, as he bolted back into the *kút* or fort of Riyadh. "Ah, Abu Sa'ud, those were great days, and it was worth a whole man's life to have seen them. It was Bin Jiluwi who hurled his dagger at the fleeing Ajlan and missed him,† and it was Bin Jiluwi's hand that seized Ajlan's leg as he tried to enter the wicket gate, and brought him to the ground, but it was 'Abdul 'Aziz's sword which struck off Ajlan's head, as he lay on the ground struggling with Bin Jiluwi. I can even now see Bin Sa'ud preparing for the sortie from Ajlan's lady's house, on the other side of the square. How cool and calm he was. He had discarded his *agdl* (head rope) and tied his *kaffiyah* over his head and round his neck, and had followed it by carefully tying his long sleeves round the back of his neck.

And what a woman was Ajlan's wife. She was found in deep sleep, and it was Bin Sa'ud who touched her and woke her up. *Minu, minu?* (who is it, who is it?), was all she said. On being told by Bin Sa'ud

* According to Bin Sa'ud's story related as recently as November 1937, 'Ubaid al Mutalaqqim was not among the famous twenty, but was among his supporters who awaited outside Riyadh among the palm groves.

† The mark of Bin Jiluwi's dagger which stuck in the great door of the fort after missing Ajlan can be seen to this day in Riyadh.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

Hawking

223 From the very earliest times hawking or falconry has been looked upon among Arabs as the sport of kings. It was probably introduced into Europe direct from Arabia, after the early Crusades, and certainly came into Spain with the Arab invaders. There is little doubt, I think, that the sport spread with Islam to Persia and even to far-off China, though the reverse process has been suggested by persons who have studied the subject.

Hawking is mentioned by the earliest Arab chroniclers, and many stories are told of how the ancient ruling house of Al Araiar, the hereditary shaikhs of the Bani Khalid in Hasa and Najd, encouraged the sport and preserved game for hawking's sake.

Northern and North-Eastern Arabia are to-day the home of the sport in the peninsula, for it is in this area that the first annual migration of the lesser bustard, or *hubara*, takes place. The *hubara* is the principal game hunted with hawks, though hare and even gazelle also give fair sport.

[224]

136 The *hubara* appears on the eastern and north-eastern seaboard of the Persian Gulf about October in each year, and birds continue to come till about April, when they gradually disappear again to cooler climes.

The local Arab says they come from the highlands of Persia, but more probably they come in the first place from Central Asia, and migrate south through Persia, to avoid the intense cold. Certainly Persia, Iraq, North-West India, Baluchistan and Eastern Arabia all see the migrating bustard.

A very few remain behind in Arabia each year and breed locally, but these are rare. I have myself seen a couple of *hubara* eggs (15th March, 1935) which were found 40 miles south of Kuwait.

223 From Zubair down to the Trucial Coast of Oman, the *hubara* season is looked forward to with the greatest keenness. Princes, Amirs, great shaikhs, petty shaikhs, and every tribesman who can scrape

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Hawks' Exploits

together a few pence to buy a hawk, all go in for the sport. In fact, every self-respecting person owns, or hopes to own, his falcon. 223

The two most commonly used hawks are known locally as the *Hurr* or *Hurra* and the *Shâhîn*.* The former is the aristocrat of the two, and fetches a much higher price.

The best hawks come from the Persian littoral, and nowadays fetch prices of from Rs.50 to Rs.150 a bird. Both *hurr* and *shâhîn* are also caught by Badawin hunters clever at snaring. The islands of Bubiyan and Warba, west of the Shatt al 'Arab Delta, are favourite snaring grounds for Kuwait Badawin, and I believe the Dhaharan peninsula, south of Qatif, is another. [435]

On first reaching Arabia the *hubara* makes for the small new green shoots of grass that come up with the early rains or *wasm* season (October). As the rainy season develops and grass comes up everywhere, the birds scatter and proceed deeper and deeper into the interior, until they are found as far inland in the north as the Syrian desert, and in the south round about Riyadh and the oasis of Jabrin. Except in small numbers the birds do not penetrate much west of this line.

Round about Zubair, Kuwait and further south as far as Qatar, the birds are very plentiful throughout the winter, and many thousands of birds are each season killed for food by the local Arabs. In Kuwait the shaikh generally bags about two thousand birds every cold weather, and the combined members of the Al Sa'ud get about the same number in Najd proper, as also do the Shaikhs of Bahrain, both on their own islands as well as on the mainland where they regularly hunt.

The best trainers of falcons round about Kuwait and Riyadh are the Rashaida tribesmen, and in the south the Al Murra tribe. Both seem to have a very special aptitude for turning out skilled birds. 231 223

A good hawk will only kill four to five *hubara* in one day, an exceptional hawk has been known to kill as many as seven to eight. I have known "Petrel", the priceless hawk of the Shaikh of Kuwait, kill as many as eleven birds in a day, but this is unique in the annals of the chase.

* *Hurr* is apparently the name given to both "Saker" and "Lagger" falcons, and *Shâhîn* is clearly the *Shahin* falcon of Natural History.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
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Hawk Traps

231 The famous "Petrol" indeed appeared always ready to try his luck
223 with a *hubara*, and I have seen him after killing his tenth bird lie on his back in a fit of exhaustion, and appear to be at the point of death. A small dose of aspirin crushed in water used to bring him round on these occasions.

552 Hawks always bear good names, selected either after famous falcons of the past or after well-known historical heroes, for instance, "Sultán", "Shabíb", "Dhiáb", "Sáhud", "Sádáh", etc.

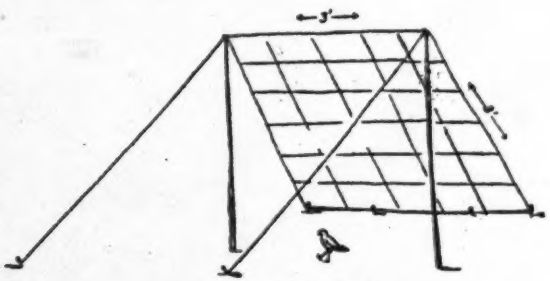
A falconer is called a *saggár*. It takes thirteen days for a good *saggár* to train a year-old hawk. If the hawk is a two- or three-year-old bird, the training period may last twenty to twenty-five days.

223 Hawks are in general called *tair* (plural: *tuyúr*). (Hurr and Sháhín falcons are particular hunting types mentioned above.)

There are two common methods for snaring hawks:

(*a*) The small square net and jerboa or pigeon method.
(*b*) The long narrow net with raven and pigeon method.

(*a*) A very coarse-mesh net of thin light texture 3 feet by 3 feet in size, is erected at an angle of 60° from the ground. The lower edge is pegged very lightly to the ground, while the upper side is supported



Hawk Trap (*a*)

on two light sticks, which are kept in position by two light cords also very lightly pegged to the ground. The net is sloped away from the wind, as the hawk always dives after its prey down and into the wind.

Under the net a jerboa (bounding field rat) or a pigeon is tied by the leg and pegged to the ground.

The hawk, seeing the animal from afar, and not perceiving the

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'ADDAS, ONE OF THE SHAIKH OF KUWAIT'S LEADING FALCONERS

page 368 a

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● 223

'ADDAS AND 'AWADH

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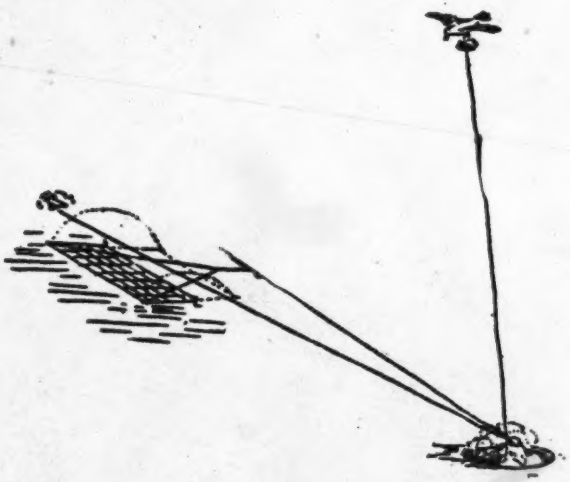
light-coloured net, swoops down to pick up its prey and dashes into the net, which at once is torn out of the ground, the pegs being loose, and closes round him closely. The hawk is then brought struggling to the ground and is easily caught. In almost every case the hawk's head and neck go through one of the large meshes of the net and this entangles him even more securely.

This method is used only when a hawk is known to be hunting in the vicinity and has been seen.

The net folds up into a small ball and can be easily carried in a man's wallet when not in use. The thin supports are carried in a hollow bamboo tube and slung across the back, rifle fashion.



Hawk Trap (*b*).

Most Rasa and Kuwait Badawin during the autumn, spring and winter, carry the snare as part of their equipment, for in those months hawks are commonly to be seen.

The pegs securing the net and the stays to the ground are made of light metal, or are nails, so as to add weight to the net when the hawk gets entangled and tries to fly off with it.

(*b*) A net of much smaller mesh than the former is placed flat on the ground. The size of the net is 7 feet by 3 feet, with sticks and

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223 string attachment 100 feet long. When the string is pulled it causes the net to whip up and over, imprisoning anything lying on the ground.

A captive pigeon is tethered by one of its wings to the ground near the net, but on the far side of it. The snarer sits in a hole 100 feet away, flanking the net, his head covered over and hidden by brushwood. He holds a long string attached to the decoy pigeon by a ring.

He next brings into play a tame and trained raven, which has a thick clod of black wool attached to its legs, to represent a bird in its claws. The raven is held captive by means of a third string some 200 feet long.

The snarer thus has three strings, one to the net, one to the pigeon, and one to the raven.

He now releases the raven, which, though held by the leg, flies up and over the net, circling round and round.

Any hawk within ten miles will see it, and thinking the raven has food or a bird in its clutches will at once fly to the spot, to snatch the prey.

The raven, seeing the hawk approach, caws violently and comes to earth, whereupon it is quickly pulled to cover by the snarer. The hunter then jerks the captive pigeon with the second string to make it struggle. The hawk, seeing it, at once swoops and kills it on the ground. While the hawk devours his prey the snarer slowly pulls it, together with the pigeon it is feeding on, towards the net. When he has got it in the right position he jerks the third string which operates the net and pulls it over the hawk by a whipping backward motion. The hawk is thus trapped.

As a rule the captive pigeon is put in a small hole in the ground and covered with brushwood till the falconer jerks it and makes it flutter as the hawk draws near.

231 When a hawk is first caught its lower eyelid is pierced by a thin thread which is passed over its head and through the other lower eyelid. This forces both eyes to close. The bird is then hooded with the *burqa*, or leather head-cap. For sketches of Hawking Outfit see page 92.

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The Hawk's Attack

Chap. XXVIII

HAWKING

There are two common methods in use to-day (1935), of hunting 223 ● *hubara* with hawks:

(*a*) The Zubair—Kuwait method.
(*b*) The Bahrain—Hasa—Najd method.

In Zubair and Kuwait the hunter ties together two end and longest wing feathers of the bird, in two places, with small pieces of string. This reduces its speed and prevents it from flying after a *hubara* which rises too far away from the falconer.

The method was invented by Ibn Mishri of Zubair, after he had lost many score of hawks. It was later adopted by the Shaikhs of Kuwait.

The old-fashioned and perhaps more sporting method allows the hawk full freedom of flight. In this way many hawks are lost even if perfectly trained, and this means expense. Slowly but surely the newer method is replacing the older, and in 1935 I heard of many members of the Al Sa'ud family in Riyadh adopting it.

Under the new method, a hawk is shown a piece of ground unhooded. If he sees a *hubara* ahead he will leave the falconer's hand and fly swiftly to his quarry, keeping close to the ground. Here he will swoop on his prey, fight and seize his victim by the neck till the hunter comes up, unless the *hubara* is able to get away with the assistance of another bustard or of his mate, who put the hawk out of action by squirting slime from their vent on to his feathers, eyes and head. Sometimes the *hubara* is able to lie so close that the hawk loses him when he arrives on the scene.

If the attack is successful, the spectator sees a white flutter of feather and tail, a scuffle on the ground, possibly several swoops on the part of the hawk, then all is quiet as the hawk seizes his quarry by the neck. White feathers soon fly in the breeze as the hawk plucks the breast of his prey preparatory to having a bite of its flesh. The falconer's job is to come up before damage is done, cut the *hubara's* throat, and then allow the hawk to have a couple of bites of its breast. After this he removes the bird by cunningly introducing a large round piece of leather between the hawk and its prey, with a sort of sliding

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

●223 motion. The hawk is then hooded once more, and the *hubara* put away in a bag.

If other *hubara* come to the victim's rescue the hawk's work for the rest of the day is over. For the dark green slime exuded violently from the *hubara's* vent is of birdlime quality, and not only half blinds him but glues all his feathers together so that he cannot fly with any degree of comfort until he is washed all over with water and dried.

This extraordinary protective equipment of the *hubara* is of interest. The slimy substance is exuded with such force as to reach a distance of a yard or more.

If the *hubara* seeks safety in immobility, the well-trained hawk, knowing that its quarry is lying low somewhere in the vicinity, at once perches on a bush (the highest close by) and waits for the hunter to come up. The latter then walks up and down and round the hawk, as he would do if walking up partridge in a cabbage patch. As the *hubara* gets up the falconer shoots. Often half a dozen birds will be bagged by this method. All are terrified of moving so long as the hawk remains sitting on the bush, and will allow the sportsman to put his foot on them before getting up.

So wonderfully can the *hubara* crouch and camouflage itself in stony or pebbly ground that I have on many occasions been unable to see the bird I had marked down till I was within ten feet of it. My car has even passed within one yard of a crouching *hubara* without its rising (11th February, 1935).

If the falconer, whether on camel-back or in a car, thinks bustard are about, but are crouching low so as not to be noticed by the hawk, he will unhood his bird, hold him high up, and raise a slow shrill cry sounding like *'A-hoh—'A-hoh—'A-hoh*, and finishing up with a rapid fire of *Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha's*. The idea is to startle the crouching *hubara*, and make him raise or turn his head or show the slightest movement. The hawk will detect the movement, even if half a mile away, and speed from the falconer's hand after its quarry.

HUNTING GAZELLE WITH HAWKS

224 The Badawin goes in for this form of sport much more than the town Arab, purely from a desire for fresh meat. He often hawks

1: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
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FALCONRY. HUNTING HAWK AND HUBARA AWAITING MASTER'S ARRIVAL

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Bedouins MJ4

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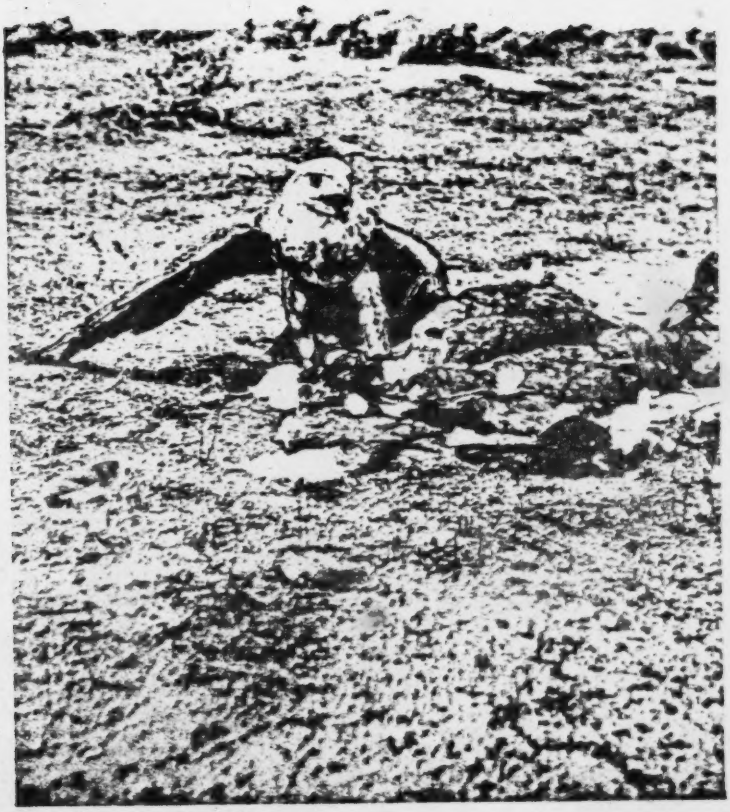

THE SHAIKH OF KUWAIT'S FAVOURITE HAWK "PETROL" AFTER A SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT. VICTIM: A HUBARA

page 384b

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
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SBEI TRIBESMEN WATERING CAMELS AT SUBAIHIYAH

page 384 d.

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Appendix VII

4. There are no difficulties to be negotiated till cars arrive at the great Dahana sand belt or barrier guarding inner Najd, as the track passes over hard gravelly country most of the way. The Dahana belt is a series of wide soft sandy ridges (eight in number) with harder going between, and has to be negotiated just before Rumah and Rumhiyah* are reached. The sand region to be crossed is approximately 40 miles broad at its narrowest point.

5. The Dahana sands are quite easily negotiated if there has been rain or a series of rainstorms, for the sand then becomes hard, and with good guides to assist a car party, several alternative routes can be taken, each of which is somewhat shorter than the track blazed by the Shaikh of Kuwait, which moved down the east side of the Dahana till the Rumah–Hufuf road was reached, and then turned sharp right (south-west by west) some miles beyond Nadhim al Kanhara.

6. If the weather is hot and there has been no rain at all the Dahana crossing presents great difficulties, and tyres have to be deflated, and progress made on second speed. A supporting car or two with spades and ropes is a necessity.

7. After crossing the Dahana, rocky country is reached and rough stones and boulders hamper cars almost as far as Buwaib Pass, which overlooks the Riyadh plain.

8. Travellers on the Kuwait–Riyadh section should have a full supply of drinking water, food, petrol and spares for an approximate 500-miles journey, as these cannot be got *en route* anywhere except at Jariya 'Ilya and Rumah, where water† only, and that of very poor quality, can be obtained.

APPENDIX VII

THE *AL SHURUF* OR "HONOURED ONES"

(THE FAMOUS BLACK HERD OF CAMELS OF THE MUTAIR TRIBE)

B 223 825

From very old times the *Al Shuruf* have been the pride and glory of the great Mutair tribe of Central and North-Eastern Arabia, and consist of a very dark, almost black herd of thoroughbred camels numbering close on three hundred animals.

Among the Mutair the *Al Shuruf* or the Honoured Ones are looked upon as a sort of "sacred emblem", or standard, for the tribe to follow

* Rumhiyah is left some miles to the west by those taking the latest and shortest car route.

† In the winter, if rains have been good in the Summán area, water can be obtained from various *dákals* or water-holes *en route*. But this is an unreliable source of supply.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1931 Art & Kuwait
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Appendix VII

in war or peace, and are at all times guarded with the greatest care and have their own special herdsmen. 223 825

The *Shuruf* can best be compared to the famous *Markab* or "Ark of Ishmael" which goes before the Rawala host when the latter tribe migrates to new regions or marches to war, and which is really nothing but a glorified ladies' camel litter, decked all over with black ostrich feathers (see under chapter dealing with the Tent and its treasures), but held in the deepest reverence by every single man and woman of the tribe.

As in the case of the *Markab*, the *Shuruf* is the rallying point of the tribe if attacked or in difficulties. The herd must be defended at all costs, and the tribe will cheerfully lose all its other camels in a battle or raid provided the *Shuruf* are safe.

In the attack, and especially if such be in the nature of a forlorn hope, the *Shuruf* have the place of honour always and lead the van. No Mutairi ever rides them, and they just move forward in a compact well-trained black mass ahead of the fighting men as if perfectly understanding the game. The latter will follow straight on to victory or death in their wake. The *Shuruf* seem also to know that they afford a sort of moving wall of protection for the footmen in their rear, and never scatter.

In peace time the famous black herd always grazes alone and under specially selected guards, always too as far from the common gaze as possible. It is said that should other strange camels get mixed up with them, the black herd will attack them and drive them out. Nor are the cows of the herd allowed to breed except from their own males.

To-day the *Al Shuruf* are in the hands of the great 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud —King and Lord of Arabia. They were taken away from the Mutair as the most severe punishment that could be meted out to them after Faisal al Duwish's rebellion of 1929–30, and are to-day (1939) most carefully guarded and looked after for the King by the faithful Shaikh Faisal bin Shiblan, head of the Jiblan sept of the great Mutair. Actually the King handed the *Shuruf* over to his brother Muhammad al Sa'ud for safe keeping after the above-mentioned rebellion, but this was a mere formality, for H.M. King 'Abdul 'Aziz' brand adorns the rear off hind quarter of each camel like this, ⁰|₀, and the herd remains the King's property, much as in the occident any war flags captured from an enemy are handed over to the King. 687 233 475 727

As far as I am aware, my wife and I are the only Europeans living who have had the opportunity of setting eyes on this jealously guarded herd and semi-sacred tribal emblem of the Mutair. This was on 7th April and 14th April, 1939, when, by special invitation of His Highness the Shaikh of Kuwait, King Bin Sa'ud sent his private camels numbering seventy-five *Raiyah* or herds, together with the *Shuruf* (some 4,500 all told) into the Araifjan and Shu'aiba districts of Kuwait to graze, the act being a gracious appreciation on the part of Shaikh Ahmad for Bin Sa'ud's good will and 825 233